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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/INSB AND M - KATHLEEN AUSTIN-FERGUSON
DELHI PLEASE PASS UNDERSECRETARY PAT KENNEDY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AMGT](#) [ABLD](#) [ASEC](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: FROM AMBASSADOR PATRICIA A. BUTENIS TO UNDERSECRETARY OF
STATE FOR MANAGEMENT PATRICK KENNEDY

¶1. We appreciate your willingness to reconsider the decision not to purchase the former British High Commission property for a New Embassy Compound (NEC) in Colombo. We know a re-examination of the decision will entail lots of work, and we will accept your final decision.

¶2. OBO has approved two sites on which to construct a NEC: the Shaw-Wallace and Parliament sites. Post strongly favors the British High Commission (BHC) property that adjoins our current location. We believe the BHC site meets the security requirements, and is best suited to meet the needs of the U.S. Mission to Sri Lanka.

¶3. Diplomatic Security applied three exclusionary factors (none of which are Overseas Security Policy Board standards) to the BHC site, which caused OBO to remove it from consideration: a) the site is located on a navigable body of water; b) the site has no secondary egress; and c) the site is bordered by a railroad on the rear of the property. Post believes these exclusionary factors for the BHC site, applied as part of an overall scoring methodology to assess site viability, deserve a second look: for example, the site does in fact have current secondary egress, with a walkout at the rear of the property, and will have expanded secondary egress with the completion of Marine Drive.

¶4. It is worth noting that in January 2007, a joint DS/OBO survey team scored the sites, taking into account cost, proximities, site characteristic, project risks, and security. The highest-scoring option was the construction of a non-standard Urban SED on the present site augmented by the BHC property.

¶5. Last December, Ambassador Blake raised the property issue with OBO Deputy Director Adam Namm and DS DAS Patrick Donovan. Rather than the exclusionary factors applied by DS earlier, the major concern expressed at the meeting by Diplomatic Security was setback on the BHC site. This was the first time Post had heard any concern expressed by DS regarding setback. DAS Donovan emphasized in the meeting that DS would not issue a setback waiver.

¶6. Post underlines that it is not requesting a setback waiver or a co-location waiver for the combined BHC/current site. Post believes that adequate setback can be achieved if the combined site were evaluated; indeed, the current Embassy building has adequate setback, and the combined property would permit OBO to construct a sufficiently-sized NEC to accommodate all Mission personnel and meet the 100-foot setback requirement. The combined site, at 6 acres, is quite a bit larger than the Shaw-Wallace site, at 3.79 acres, which DS assesses as having adequate setback.

¶7. Post has evaluated the pro and con factors for each of the three sites. Our assessment follows for your consideration.

The British High Commission Property

Pro:

- Ease of access to GSL ministries and other institutions.

- Ease of access to the Embassy by our interlocutors and clients.
- Good use of capital security construction monies and return on taxpayer investment: the BHC property is 2.5 acres and - when combined with our current property - would total six acres. We would be able to purchase the BHC for \$11-13 million (compared to \$32 million to purchase the 3.79 acre Shaw-Wallace site).
- Enhanced ability to evacuate by sea in extremis.

Con:

- The Parliament site is less expensive (\$9.5 million).

DS Objections to the BHC site, and Post's response:

- 1) The site is located on a navigable body of water.
 - There has never been an assault from the sea.
 - Post One electronic surveillance covers rear of compound.
 - The Sri Lankan Navy conducts continuous patrol immediately off the coast, and can be expected to continue this patrol given the location of Temple Trees (the Prime Minister's residence) across Galle Road from the BHC site.
 - The site is separated from the water by railroad and (future) Marine Drive.
 - There is no longer an LTTE submarine or marine vessel threat.
- 2) The site has no secondary egress.
 - This is not accurate. There is a walkout at the rear of the property. Though not ideal, this would work if an emergency dictated such action.
 - Marine Drive extension: Marine Drive will be extended to the north, and will parallel Galle Road with a terminus onto Galle Road at the American Center. The Southern terminus is approximately 10 kilometers south, rejoining Galle Road at Dehiwela Canal.
 - Marine Drive progress: The Sri Lankan Roads Department surveyed the land in the spring of 2009, and marked the right-of-way to extend Marine Drive through the back portion of our current property.
- 3) The site is bordered by a railroad on the rear of the property.
 - The commuter railway is fixed conveyance with more tightly controlled access than a roadway.
 - The future Marine Drive extension directly behind the Embassy will provide additional buffer distance between the property wall and the commuter railway.

Shaw-Wallace Site

Pro:

- Downtown location, though not as well situated for appointments and access as the current/BHC site.
- No height restrictions.
- Primary and secondary egress from property to major roads.

Con:

- The most expensive site: by moving one kilometer south on Galle Road, Post would trade a 6 acre (combined current location and BHC) site for a 3.79 acre site, and would have to pay an additional \$18 million.
- Small site footprint is oddly shaped and would require building a 10-12 story tower.
- No or minimal space for warehouse and maintenance shops, which would require Post to lease warehouse and shop space off the NEC.

Parliament Site

Pro:

- Lowest cost (\$9.5 million).
- At nine acres, the largest parcel of land.
- Close to the Department-supported school that nearly all Mission children attend.

Con:

- Remote site with long distance travel to GSL and outside meetings.
- Security implications for our staff of commuting daily on the road to Parliament.
- Frequent road closures upwards to one hour, especially when

Parliament is in session.

- This low lying area is subject to frequent severe localized flooding which makes the roads impassable (and would affect embassy operations).
- Building height restricted to two stories.
- Long commuting distance for 15 existing government owned houses, including the CMR and DCR.
- As short-term leased housing shifts to this area, Mission housing would be split, negatively impacting the cohesiveness of the Mission community.

18. It appears that the Department may have excluded the BHC site from consideration based on the expectation that a waiver for setback would be required to build a NEC. Post recommends that OBO fully explore whether a NEC would fit on the combined current/BHC site, and that OBO take another look at the three remaining DS objections to the property. Thank you for your consideration.
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